

Chapter 7

Round 1: Bradley Versus Yorty

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"On election night, we got the first actual evidence that... (Yorty) won that election. It was an astounding thing for many people because, based on every poll that we had done and that others had done, there was no clue whatsoever that he would be able to pull off a reversal of the trend that had been building since the primary election. So, on election night as the returns came in, we could see from the first returns, the absentee ballots, and then the continuing election returns for the rest of the evening, it was clear that the campaign of racism, of fear had indeed paid off."

Tom Bradley¹

In earlier editions of *California Policy Options*, we traced the 1961 and 1965 successful campaigns for mayor of the City of Los Angeles of Sam Yorty.² The first election marked the beginning of a turning point in L.A. history in which the downtown elite – and especially the *LA Times* – lost control of events. Yorty, the candidate who wasn't supposed to win nonetheless carried the day. Yorty's first election had a certain resonance to Donald Trump's election to the presidency in 2016 – an election he wasn't supposed to win. Both candidates used TV effectively, especially by making over-the-top charges and statements that attracted attention and newsworthy coverage. One difference back in 1961, however, was that Yorty didn't use the racially-charged rhetoric that Trump did. Yorty could, in fact, claim that he had done more to integrate the city administration than his predecessors.

The 1965 election found Yorty winning the endorsement of the *LA Times* and the downtown elite. It turned out that the city had kept functioning during his first term in office to the surprise of the *Times*. Yorty, moreover, was happy to engage in the kind of civic boosterism that the elite liked. And unlike Trump, once the 1961 campaign was over, he didn't keep attacking the *LA Times*. But soon after Yorty's re-election in 1965, the Watts Riot occurred, and it became apparent that all was not well in Los Angeles. Moreover, the *LA Times* began to shift from its long-time conservatism and identification with Republican causes to being a more liberal newspaper.

Segments of elite opinion in the city began to shift as well, but Yorty remained much the same. An alliance of sorts began to form around the possibility of electing African American city councilmember Tom Bradley in 1969. There were liberals who liked Bradley both for his stance on issues and because they saw electing an African American mayor as a step forward for the city. And there were segments of the city's elite who were still shocked by Watts, disappointed in Yorty, and had the idea that an African American mayor would in some way prevent another riot. With that alliance in opposition to the incumbent mayor, Yorty wasn't supposed to win a third term in 1969, but – as in 1961 – he won anyway. And this time – unlike in 1961 – the issue of race became a major element of his campaign.

As was the case in the mayoral election of 1961, there was a resonance between much more recent elections and events back then. The Yorty vs. Bradley contest in 1969 has lessons for the present. As the old adage goes, history doesn't repeat exactly, but it sometimes rhymes.

¹From "The Impossible Dream: Tom Bradley," UCLA Oral History Program (1979?), p. 159. Available at https://oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb4c6009nh&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire_text.

²Daniel J.B. Mitchell, "The Trash-Talking Candidate Who Wasn't Supposed to Win," *California Policy Options 2018*, Chapter 6, pp. 134-156. Available at <https://archive.org/details/PolicyOptions2018>; Daniel J.B. Mitchell, "Before the Storm: Sam Yorty's Second Election as Mayor of Los Angeles," *California Policy Options 2021*, Chapter 4, pp. 73-89. Available at <https://archive.org/details/cpo-2021>.

Tensions and Divisions

"One traumatic event followed another as a wide array of social and political trends that had been building for years reached critical mass."

From "1968: The Year That Changed America Forever"³

The late 1960s saw tensions and divisions along various dimensions. If one is searching for points in American history that were as divisive as today's politics, that period is a good place to look. At the national level in that era, the Vietnam War was raging and had split the Democratic Party into pro-war and anti-war factions. In 1968, Democratic President Lyndon Johnson dropped out of contention as a candidate for reelection after anti-war candidate Eugene McCarthy made a strong showing in the New Hampshire primary for the Democratic presidential nomination. Senator Robert Kennedy – also seen as anti-war – became the major rival to Vice President Hubert Humphrey, largely displacing McCarthy. But Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles after winning the California primary. During the Los Angeles mayoral election of 1969, the trial of assassin Sirhan Sirhan was taking place as a reminder.

In any event, the Vietnam War was constantly in the news, along with the draft as a reminder. Although the public had been given assurances that the conflict in Vietnam was under control and that progress was being made, the so-called Tet Offensive by North Vietnam in 1968 – highly visible on television – suggested the opposite. Doubts about military assertions of optimism were developing.

The 1968 presidential contest eventually boiled down to Richard Nixon, making a comeback in Republican politics vs. Humphrey. The Chicago Democratic convention that year which nominated Humphrey was beset by major disturbances outside the hall and division within. Former Alabama Governor George Wallace ran on a segregationist platform as a third-party candidate and was a victim of a failed assassination that left him partially paralyzed.

Although there had been some urban disturbances before, the Watts Riot of 1965 eclipsed those earlier events and set a pattern for similar outbreaks in other cities during the late 1960s. In 1968, racial tensions were further heightened by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. The civil rights movement – initially centered on the segregated south – began to be felt throughout the country, and more militant factions emerged such as the Black Panthers.

There was also in that period turmoil on college campuses. At UCLA, a clash between the Panthers and another faction for unclear reasons led to the on-campus murder of two persons.⁴ The first wave of the baby-boom generation was coming of age and – in response to Vietnam and civil rights – was producing increasingly dramatic student demonstrations, starting at UC-Berkeley, and then spreading. Although racial conflict in the U.S. was largely seen as a Black/White issue, in L.A. you had in addition the so-called Chicano Blowouts – walkouts from high schools of Mexican-American students in 1968 protesting educational deficiencies.

Histories of the period often focus on student protests, counter-culture "hippies" upsetting social conventions and using drugs, and Old Left vs. New Left political movements. But blue collar workers

³Kenneth T. Walsh, *US News*, December 31, 2017. Available at <https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2017-12-31/1968-the-year-that-changed-america-forever>.

⁴Mike Davis and Jon Wiener, *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties* (New York: Verso 2020), pp. 440-452.

were also affected by the general slippage of the old order; a wave of strikes occurred, and older union officials complained about unrealistic demands of younger workers. Popular culture reflected changing social standards. Movies had long been subjected to a code of conduct that nixed any display of sex, drugs, or other taboos. But the sixties saw a shift from those norms, offending older generations.

In short, disorder and social change was seemingly everywhere, and the electorate shifted to the right in response. Ronald Reagan was elected governor of California, defeating two-term incumbent Pat Brown, in part on a platform of taming the radicals at UC-Berkeley. Nixon was elected over Humphrey by mobilizing what he termed “the silent majority” of voters on a law-and-order platform and the notion that he would somehow resolve the Vietnam conflict.

Of course, many of these issues were beyond municipal politics. The mayor of Los Angeles is not in charge of foreign policy (although Yorty often opined on foreign and military affairs). In particular, in Los Angeles – with its weak mayor system – even functions that in other cities are ultimately in the hands of the mayor are diffused in L.A. Elected school and community college boards handle education. The County of Los Angeles – not the city – handles “welfare,” public health, and jails. At the time, even the municipal police in L.A. were semi-autonomous. Nonetheless, the larger social and cultural tensions besetting national and state politics became part of the 1969 city mayoral elections.

Tom Bradley

“When many of us determined to pool our resources to accomplish the election of the first black member to the city council, a meeting was called by community leaders... When Tom rose to speak, everyone listened with some apprehension to this man whose background was that of a police officer. When he finished, it was clear that the community had found someone who could respond to need and provide leadership.”

Superior Court Judge Jack Tenner⁵

In the earlier chapters on Sam Yorty cited above, we learned something about his background. But who was Tom Bradley, Yorty’s rival for the mayoralty in 1969, and ultimately – but not in 1969 – Los Angeles’ first and only African American mayor?⁶ One author writing about the 1969 election contest tried to find parallels between the two men, such as their origins in the “American midlands” and the fact that they both had practiced law.⁷ But in fact the two men couldn’t have been more different.

Bradley was born in a small Texas town in 1917. He casually mentioned in his oral interview that among his siblings, five had died in infancy. His father was a sharecropper who kept accumulating debt and, after a series of moves, took the family to Los Angeles. Although neither of his parents had finished elementary school, both, he reported, “constantly pounded into my head the need to get a good education.”⁸ Although L.A. didn’t have the kind of legal segregation that prevailed in the south, Bradley reported various incidents of prejudice and roadblocks throughout his career. In school, he had a White

⁵“The Incredible Dream,” UCLA Oral History, *op. cit.*, Introduction, pp. viii-ix.

⁶His full name was Thomas Jefferson Bradley, but he used only Tom throughout his career. See <https://peoplepill.com/people/tom-bradley/> and <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Bradley-13745>.

⁷Richard L. Maullin, “Los Angeles Liberalism,” *Trans-action*, May 1971, p. 41.

⁸“The Incredible Dream,” UCLA Oral History, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

friend whose parents disapproved of them being together. So, they were friends at school but not openly outside.

While one elementary school teacher took an interest in Bradley, encouraged him to read (which he did), and gave him clothes his family couldn't afford, his junior high guidance counselor discouraged him from taking academic courses that could lead to college. Bradley was told instead that he should prepare for a career as a manual laborer. However, he pursued academic courses despite the advice and got the idea that being a good athlete would help him get into college. Bradley, as it happened, excelled in track and football.

In the high school he attended, which had a mixed student body, if interracial tensions developed, the school administrators would call on Bradley to mediate. Ultimately, he was elected president of the Boys League of the school. Obtaining support from, and getting along with, people of diverse backgrounds was to mark Bradley's later political career. *"As well as anybody could say that they are colorblind, I really believe that is a fact of my life,"* he said much later.⁹

While in today's political climate such a statement might be seen as naive or even politically incorrect, it was the way Bradley saw himself – or, perhaps more realistically – wanted to be seen by the general public in his campaigns. What his innermost thoughts were is hard to determine. Even his wife in an interview allowed that *"he doesn't tell anyone his private thoughts, not even me."*¹⁰

There was discussion in that era – despite the contemporary national turmoil – that the American south would soon be emerging into a *"post-racial"* era. In that new reformed south to come, so the argument went, general economic issues would come to dominate and would replace divisive racial appeals.¹¹ Some readers might be reminded of Barack Obama's much later approach to campaigning for the presidency. Obama played down race as much as possible and focused instead on such issues as dealing with the Great Recession and with national health care in order to build a sufficiently wide political coalition.¹²

In any case, Bradley's idea in high school that athletics would pay off proved correct. He was recruited to UCLA by an African American student track athlete, Jimmy LuValle, who later became a distinguished

⁹Quoted in James W. Johnson, *The Black Bruins: The Remarkable Lives of UCLA's Jackie Robinson, Woody Strode, Tom Bradley, Kenny Washington, and Ray Bartlett* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), p. 211.

¹⁰Quoted in Robert Kistler, "Councilman Bradley's Inner Cool: His Strongest Attribute," *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1969.

¹¹James T. Wooten, "Compact Set Up for 'Post-Racial' South," *New York Times*, October 5, 1971. Available at <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1971/10/05/79156105.pdf>.

¹²"But even after I think a shift in perspective around George Floyd, we're still back into the trenches of how do we get different district attorneys elected? How do we actually reform police departments? Now we're back in the world of politics. And as soon as we get back into the world of politics, now it's a numbers game. You have to persuade, and you have to create coalitions." Former President Barack Obama interviewed in "Obama Explains How America Went From 'Yes We Can' to 'MAGA,'" The Ezra Klein Show, *New York Times*, June 1, 2021. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/01/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-barack-obama.html>.

chemist.¹³ While at UCLA, Bradley was reported to have played the same kind of mediator role that he had played in high school.¹⁴

On something of a lark, Bradley took an exam to become a Los Angeles police officer and passed. Although the LAPD had a *de facto* quota on the number of African American officers it would accept – there was an attempt to disqualify Bradley on medical grounds despite being a college athlete – he became a police officer. As a result, he left UCLA before finishing his undergraduate degree.

Within the LAPD, Bradley rose through the ranks to detective and lieutenant. While a member of the police force, he pushed for better community relations and at least reducing some of the barriers faced by African Americans and Mexican Americans with the department. In his oral interview, Bradley notes that the department had been poorly run and corrupt until it came under the regime of Chief William Parker who had been selected to clean up the agency.

In 1938, then-Mayor Frank Shaw was recalled for corruption, in part connected with the LAPD, thus setting in motion a sequence of events that eventually led to Chief Parker being appointed twelve years later. Bradley acknowledged in his oral interview that Parker brought professionalism and better management to the department. But he also noted that Parker's alcoholism was a problem along with the fact that, when inebriated, the chief was known to express racially-charged views. Parker, in short, was a reformist in terms of administration, but not in terms of race.

In 1952, Bradley began taking night courses toward a law degree at Southwestern Law School. He graduated in 1956 and passed the California bar. He also became involved in local politics and began to be viewed as a "troublemaker" within the LAPD, in part because of his political activities on behalf of a city council candidate who was critical of the police. Bradley eventually resigned from the department and practiced law for several years.

When a vacancy arose in the city council district in which Bradley resided, a campaign was started by local businessmen to have Bradley appointed by the council to fill the slot. However, the council instead appointed a man named Joe Hollingsworth. An abortive attempt was made to recall Hollingsworth, but the recall petitions were rejected on technical legal grounds after some litigation.¹⁵

When election time for the seat now filled by Hollingsworth arrived, Bradley ran as a candidate for city council in 1963 against Hollingsworth. By that time, Yorty was mayor and apparently initially supported Bradley until warned off by Chief Parker.¹⁶ According to Bradley, Yorty's support was indirect and done through staff. Nonetheless, in a flattering biography of Yorty written by an *LA Times* reporter during the honeymoon period during which the *Times* supported him, Bradley was termed a "supporter" of Yorty.¹⁷

Calling Bradley a "supporter" of Yorty seems an exaggeration; he had no particular grudge against Yorty at that time and had not been a fan of Norris Poulson, the incumbent mayor whom Yorty had beaten in

¹³LuValle Commons on the UCLA campus is named for him.

¹⁴Referenced in the documentary "Bridging the Divide: Tom Bradley and the Politics of Race," by Lyn Goldfarb and Alison Sotomayor (2015). Available for purchase at <https://www.mayortombradley.com/>.

¹⁵Beeman C. Patterson, "Political Action of Negroes in Los Angeles: A Case Study in the Attainment of Councilmanic Representation," *Phylon*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2nd Qtr., 1969), pp. 170-183.

¹⁶"Ask the Mayor: Samuel Yorty," UCLA Oral History Program (1987), p. 117.

¹⁷Ed Ainsworth, *Maverick Mayor: A Biography of Sam Yorty, Mayor of Los Angeles* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), p. 186.

1961. Yorty, in his 1961 upset election campaign, was seen positively by the African American community according to Bradley, or at least more positively than the incumbent mayor. Bradley's 1963 campaign for city council took place in a council district that had a mixed population of various racial, religious, and ethnic groups. The African American-Jewish alliance of support that characterized Bradley's subsequent political career developed in that first district election and continued thereafter.¹⁸

Once elected to the council, Bradley actively pursued local nitty-gritty district issues such as installation of streetlights. He found the city council to be a relatively sleepy institution with members often not paying much attention to local issues and with local voters not paying much attention to their representatives. The members tended to regard their districts as their own fiefdoms despite the fact that even projects within districts required the support of the overall council. Bradley found that his efforts to investigate local controversies outside his district were not appreciated by his fellow councilmembers. Nevertheless, he took the position that if his vote was needed on such issues, he had a duty to investigate and to meet with local residents who had concerns.

Yorty indicated that Bradley was out of the country at the time of the Watts riots.¹⁹ Bradley – in his oral interview – said that there was nothing he could have done about the Watts situation until peace was restored by the National Guard.²⁰ In any case, after Watts, Bradley pushed for creation of a municipal Human Rights Commission. Yorty agreed to its creation, but the resulting Commission in Bradley's view didn't do much once established.

By the time Bradley came up for reelection as councilmember in 1967, he essentially had no opposition. Thus, by that time he was well positioned to run for mayor in the 1969 municipal elections. Meanwhile, a series of municipal scandals began to develop which tended to tarnish Yorty's reputation although there were no accusations against the mayor himself. Moreover, post-Watts, elements of the city's elite were beginning to doubt the ability of Yorty to manage municipal affairs and to maintain calm in a tense environment.

The 1969 Election: The Beginning

"The mayoralty race of 1969 would be the subject of as much nationwide scrutiny as any municipal campaign in California history. It would almost be the undoing of (Sam Yorty)."

Political scientists John C. Bollens and Grant B. Geyer²¹

¹⁸It might be noted that former state assembly speaker and mayor of San Francisco Willie Brown, in his oral history, claims to have played some undefined role in the political rise of Tom Bradley. Exactly what this role was is unclear and was not mentioned by Bradley nor by his biographers (nor by Brown's). There is also a reference by Willie Brown to Bradley appointing someone to the committee that examined the Watts Riot. However, the McCone Commission that looked into Watts was appointed by the then-governor Pat Brown. "First Among Equals: California Legislative Leadership, 1964-1992, Willie Lewis Brown, Jr.," Oral Interview, pp. 190, 219. Available at <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb0b69n7k5/?brand=oac4>. Willie Brown wasn't elected to the assembly until 1965, so it's hard to see what role he could have played in Bradley's initial run for office. By the time of Bradley's much later run for governor (1982 and 1986), however, Assembly Speaker Brown could have been influential.

¹⁹"Ask the Mayor," UCLA Oral History Project, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

²⁰"The Incredible Dream," UCLA Oral History Project, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

²¹John C. Bollens and Grant B. Geyer, *Yorty: Politics of a Constant Candidate* (Pacific Palisades, CA: Palisades Publishers, 1973), p. 162.

There is no precise beginning of the mayoral election of 1969. Somewhat arbitrarily, we start the story in November 1968, also the date when Richard Nixon was elected president. Exactly when Mayor Yorty decided he would run for a third term is uncertain. Maybe he intended to do so from the beginning of his second term, if he didn't attain some higher office before that election occurred. But that possibility was a big "if" for Yorty. He had run unsuccessfully for the Democratic nomination for governor in 1966, losing to Pat Brown. When Pat Brown, in turn, lost in the general election to Republican Ronald Reagan, Yorty went to the Reagan celebration. Earlier in his career, Yorty had run unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate.

In any case, Yorty had been shifting rightwards for some time – even before Watts. He supported Nixon over John F. Kennedy in 1960, and when Nixon won the presidency in 1968. Yorty seemed to think he was in line for an appointment in the incoming Nixon administration. He seemed to have the idea that he might be appointed Secretary of Defense, an idea which was satirized by a political cartoon in the *Los Angeles Times* by illustrator Paul Conrad.

Conrad's cartoon pictured Yorty as about to be carried off to a mental hospital by white-coated attendants. Yorty sued the *LA Times* and Conrad for \$2 million on the grounds that he had been libeled by the implication that he was insane.²² Not surprisingly, his lawsuit was not successful. But it followed Yorty's pattern of suing opponents – by that time he viewed the *LA Times* as an opponent – a pattern which he established by suing incumbent Mayor Norris Poulson in 1961 during the Yorty-Poulson contest. (Yorty dropped the suit after winning the election.) A *Times* editorial in response to the lawsuit said that maybe it was the newspaper that "*was a little insane*" when it had endorsed Yorty back in 1965.²³

By the time of the cartoon and lawsuit, the *Times* had clearly tired of Yorty. It had exposed a scandal involving a Harbor Commission member who had been involved in an improper contract award along with other figures within his administration. (There was never a charge that Yorty had done anything improper.) Yorty attacked the judge overseeing the trial of a former harbor commissioner who was convicted. But another scandal was developing related to Recreation and Parks Commission.

As might be expected, the scandals became an issue in the mayoral campaign. But it's interesting that Bradley didn't make much of them years later when he looked back at the 1969 election. In his subsequent oral history when he was asked about the 1969 election, Bradley didn't mention the scandals, although he certainly raised them during the campaign. His biographers argue that Bradley mainly felt that Yorty wasn't a good mayor because he lacked a vision for L.A.'s future. Bradley regarded Yorty as a part-time mayor who enjoyed being in the spotlight and travelling around the world,

²²The cartoon can be seen in Christopher Lamb, "Drawing the Line: An Absolute Defense for Political Cartoons," in Lucy Shelton Caswell and Jared Gardner (eds.), *Drawing the Line* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2017). Available at http://i412cartooning.weebly.com/uploads/6/4/2/2/6422481/legal_issues.pdf (p. 5). See also Court of Appeals of California, Second Appellate District, Division Two. December 15, 1970.] Samuel W. Yorty, Plaintiff and Appellant, v. Otis Chandler et al., Defendants and Respondents. Available at <https://law.justia.com/cases/california/court-of-appeal/3d/13/467.html>.

²³"Mayor Yorty Finds a Laugh," *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 1968.

ostensibly on behalf of the city.²⁴ But Bradley viewed Yorty as failing to tackle major civic issues. Bradley saw the corruption of appointees as a byproduct of the mayor's lack of attention to managing the city.

At the time, apart from the scandals, there was the usual set of local controversies that you might find in any city.²⁵ Yorty had proposed a golf course in the San Fernando Valley, but the city council was reluctant. He was also pushing a plan to recycle sewage water and use it for watering golf courses. Other public works were going ahead, however, particularly in the Valley which was the mayor's electoral base. At the time, the powerful and quasi-autonomous Community Redevelopment Agency was in the midst of various "urban renewal projects" that involved demolishing rundown areas such as Bunker Hill downtown and another such area in San Pedro.

Yorty, it might be noted, was opposed to Proposition 9 on the November 1968 ballot – a property tax limitation that was a forerunner of Prop 13 which was on the ballot ten years later. Property taxes were an important source of local revenue, so his opposition to Prop 9 was not surprising. But it put Yorty in an alliance of opposition with liberal groups such as the AFL-CIO and the NAACP, along with conservative politicians such as Governor Reagan.²⁶ (Ultimately, Prop 9 was defeated.)

However, apart from local affairs, Yorty frequently commented on national issues. For example, he was supportive of the Vietnam War effort and accused President Johnson of "appeasement" of the enemy by temporarily halting bombing as an election gimmick. The war issue had split the Democrats, but Tom Bradley and others endorsed presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey as nonetheless preferable to Richard Nixon.

And there were local affairs that mirrored national concerns. At what was then known as San Fernando Valley State College (now California State University, Northridge), members of the Black Students Union and other student groups occupied an administrative building. An administrative aide from Yorty's office mediated their departure. But such events – as signs of disorder and social unrest – were to play a major role in the eventual defeat of Bradley by Yorty. Student unrest and social unrest were a major factor in the Nixon victory at the presidential level in November 1968. The same was to be true of Yorty's victory the following May, especially after the primary.

It took time for public attention to move from the national presidential election to the upcoming mayoral contest. Bradley had considered the option of running in 1969 after his reelection to the city council in 1967. But with the mayoral primary coming up, candidates would soon have to file officially to be on the ballot. Bradley made the final decision to run, probably by the time of the 1968 national election. Shortly thereafter, the liberal wing of the local Democratic Party was talking up a Bradley

²⁴J. Gregory Payne and Scott C. Ratzan, *Tom Bradley: The Impossible Dream* (Santa Monica, CA: Roundtable, 1986), pp. 84-85.

²⁵The narrative starting at this point is heavily dependent on LA Times articles available from ProQuest Historical Newspapers. We cite the specific articles mainly when direct quotations are involved.

²⁶Although Reagan was later to capitalize on the anti-tax fervor surrounding Prop 13, as governor – and as a conservative – he favored keeping issues at the local government level and feared that cutting the local tax base would push responsibility for local services up to the state.

candidacy.²⁷ By then it was widely assumed that Yorty would run for a third term, particularly since he wasn't being offered anything by the incoming Nixon administration.²⁸

In terms of demographic considerations for any candidate in deciding to run, the really big wave of immigration that was to alter the population mix of the state and the city had barely begun. The big demographic story of the 1960s had been the continued general influx of population from the rest of the U.S., not from abroad. The African American population increased by almost two thirds from Census years 1960 to 1970 compared to a general population increase of around 16 percent. About 11 percent of the City's population was African American. However, pollsters of the day estimated that about 18% of city voters were African American.²⁹

Statistics on Hispanic inhabitants were inconsistently measured in that era, and Hispanics were often lumped with Whites in official numbers. A much larger fraction of the Hispanic population consisted of native-born citizens at the time (and thus more likely to be entitled to vote) than was later the case. About 28% of the Hispanic population was foreign-born in 1970, compared with about half in 1990.³⁰ In the broader L.A. area, about 16% of the population was Hispanic but many lived in areas east of the ...A. city limits. Pollsters of the day believed that Mexican-Americans constituted about 13% of the vote.³¹

Official numbers on the Jewish population in L.A. are not kept by government statistical agencies which don't track religion. However, the Bradley campaign story is often linked to a Black-Jewish alliance. One estimate put the Jewish population at around six percent of the total in 1970.³² Of course, population and voting are not the same thing for any demographic group. Apart from basic requirements of age and citizenship as qualifications for voting, there is the issue of actual voter registration and, among those registered, the propensity actually to turn out in a given election. Then, as now, producing a turnout among friendly voters is a challenge for any candidate.

At that point in time, Yorty wasn't making race an issue. In early November, for example, he appeared as a guest on a local public TV show, "Black Perspective." And in February, he appeared with Kenneth Clark, the well-known African American sociologist, to discuss minority issues on another TV program. But there were signs of things to come.

Yorty debated African American congressman Adam Clayton Powell of New York City over the virtues of the American political system at the University of Illinois. On the other hand, Yorty was always happy to

²⁷Kenneth J. Nanucchi, "Democrats Analyze Ruins of Defeat, Find Split Party, Few Funds, Unrest," *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 1968. A spokesperson for a local California Democratic Council (CDC) said there would be "great interest" in the CDC in backing Bradley.

²⁸Yorty never officially endorsed Nixon (or Humphrey) in the 1968 presidential campaign, but he reported giving campaign advice to Nixon. In early December, he saw Nixon in Palm Springs. Whether any positions were offered is unclear.

²⁹Ruben Salazar, "Bradley Seeking Racial Coalition in Mayor Race," *Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 1969.

³⁰Georges Sabagh and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, "Population Change: Immigration and Ethnic Transformation," chapter 3 in Roger Waldinger and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, eds, *Ethnic Los Angeles* (New York: Russell Sage, 1996), p. 95. The estimates are for the wider L.A. area, not just the City of Los Angeles. See also estimates from the Los Angeles Almanac available from <http://www.laalmanac.com/population/po20.php>.

³¹Salazar, op. cit.

³²City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning, *SurveyLA: Jewish History* (2016). Available at <https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/cb3a43ec-8138-4517-95e1-3a1cf0947309/LosAngelesJewishHistoryContext.pdf>.

point to his appointments of African American officials. One of his executive staff, an African American woman, Ethel Bryant, received an award from a local business group. Yorty's major direct clash with Bradley was over Yorty's proposal for L.A. to donate \$500 for a bell to San Diego for that city's 200th anniversary. (Bradley wanted more information before city council approval; the bell was eventually approved.)

Bradley, however, by mid-November 1968 was talking in public about L.A.'s failure to address police-community relations. Poor housing and education were not being addressed by the city in Bradley's view. But an incumbent mayor has a natural platform that a challenger doesn't necessarily have. There is a flow of civic programs which provide a mayor with coverage and publicity. Yorty, for example, could announce a new program of having firefighters visit schools. Yorty was on hand for an announcement of a new hotel to be built on the redeveloped Bunker Hill. A statue of a mythical Native American boy was unveiled in Van Nuys and the mayor was also there. Similarly, the Iranian prime minister was greeted by the mayor at the L.A. airport.³³

Local controversies inevitably involved the mayor. Should (or should not) a tennis center be built in Cheviot Hills, for example? What about a controversy with the City of Inglewood over noise from the Los Angeles airport? What could be done to speed up construction of a swimming pool in Pacoima? And, apart from the swimming pool, should low cost housing be built in Pacoima in the face of resistance by residents?

Still, Yorty was not spending as much time in L.A. as he could to take advantage of the opportunities for publicity. He announced he would be travelling in December to Germany, Israel, and Ireland to "*decide... whether I want to run for mayor again.*"³⁴ Before he left, however, he sent a letter to Governor Reagan and the UC Regents complaining that he had been subject to "*boisterous, brash and insulting*" behavior at UCLA when he addressed a group of students on that campus.³⁵

In late November, Bradley officially announced that he would run for mayor. "*I hope no one votes for me just because I am a black man. But I also hope nobody opposes me just because I'm a black man,*" he said. In an indirect slam at Yorty, he promised if elected not to "*become a foreign affairs expert.*"³⁶ Although the municipal scandals were mentioned, they were not Bradley's focus. However, he did not really need to highlight the scandals to put them before the public. During this period, a former Recreation and Parks commissioner was under indictment and the news media, on and off, covered developments in his case. In fact, five members of various commissions who had been appointed by Yorty were under indictments. (A city council member was also under indictment at the time.)

Apart from Bradley, other public figures were also reported as contemplating entering the race, among them Baxter Ward, a local TV newscaster. Members of the city council other than Bradley were also mulling the race. With Yorty out of the country for significant periods, it was left for others to garner attention for their potential candidacies.

³³The U.S. and Iran had a very different relationship at the time than is currently the case.

³⁴"Metropolitan," *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1968.

³⁵"Yorty Protests Rude Greeting at UCLA Talk," *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1968.

³⁶Richard Bergholz, "Councilman Bradley Raps L.A. 'Scandals,' Will Run for Mayor," *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1968.

The 1969 Election: Announcement Time

"I run because I want a city where every citizen can walk the streets day or night with a sense of full security and dignity."

City council member Tom Bradley announcing his candidacy for mayor³⁷

"The derelictions of a few people shouldn't be used to blacken the name of the city... or to attack me."

Mayor Sam Yorty announcing his candidacy for reelection³⁸

To be in the race officially, candidates had to file the required papers between January 11 and 25. Thus, the first few days of January were decision time. After a week's vacation in Mexico, Yorty returned to Los Angeles and formally announced his candidacy on January 2. He dismissed the issue of corruption.³⁹

Bradley – in response – focused instead on the mayor's excessive fondness for international travel. While minor candidates also filed, the prominent individuals who would run against Yorty in the April 1 primary, apart from Bradley, would be another city council member – Robert J. Wilkinson, who represented parts of West L.A. and the San Fernando Valley, the above-mentioned local TV personality Baxter Ward, who claimed there were revenue problems at Los Angeles Airport, and the Republican congressional representative from L.A. area's Westside (including Malibu and Santa Monica) – Alphonso Bell.

Bell was what hardly exists nowadays in national and local politics, a generally liberal Republican. Bell was an advocate of public transit, among other issues. Another congressional representative, Thomas Rees, a Democrat, also joined the race, saying the city needed a surcharge on the state income tax to meet its budget requirements. But he soon dropped out saying he couldn't raise sufficient funds for a viable campaign.

It was also reported that other plausible candidates were waiting in the wings, believing that Yorty – despite his formal announcement – would ultimately drop out and would not actually file by the deadline. Bradley, however, was taking Yorty's announcement seriously. He charged that Yorty has *"done little or nothing"* regarding civic issues and challenged him to a series of debates.⁴⁰

Yorty still seem absorbed by the soon-to-take-office Nixon administration and by foreign affairs. He claimed to have advised Nixon on who he should appoint to be U.S. representative to the Paris peace talks on the Vietnam War. He flew to the east coast, in part to tape what were termed educational TV shows including one at Brandeis University. He dismissed the corruption issue as something drummed up by the *LA Times* and said that with hundreds of appointees, he couldn't guarantee that a few wouldn't misbehave.

There were other offices up for election in the 1969 cycle. Among them were members of a newly-created junior (now "community") college board. And among those running for the board was a relatively unknown Edmund G. Brown, Jr. (Jerry Brown) who figured that having the same name as his

³⁷Quoted in *ibid.*

³⁸Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Yorty Announces He Will Seek Third 4-Year Term as Mayor," *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 1969.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰Quoted in "Metropolitan," *Los Angeles Times*, January 5, 1969.

dad – the former governor – would be a plus. It was. Jerry Brown was ultimately to achieve his first elective office in that campaign.

It might have been expected early on that Yorty could count on coming in first in the primary, given the number of his opponents, even if he didn't win a majority and thus avoid a runoff. Name recognition – as Jerry Brown believed – counts for something. Yes, scandals in the Yorty administration were an issue, but many voters in L.A. were not especially attentive to local affairs, so long as nothing tangibly bad was happening to them.

Moreover, the local area was growing and developing, and although the mayor's travel propensities were potentially an issue, they were also a source of publicity for the mayor. Nonetheless, a report in the *LA Times* indicated that the major mayoral candidates all believed that if forced into a runoff, Yorty would lose. But the candidates' advisors, other than Bradley's advisors, all believed that Bradley was the weakest opponent to Yorty because of the race issue.⁴¹

Yorty could continue to get his name in the news by attending civic events and making announcements. On the day he announced his candidacy, for example, he also announced a small federal grant for summer youth programs. A few days later, he announced completion of a codification of city practices for city council consideration.

The mayor was able to report on traffic statistics of the Port of L.A. And he promised not to run for the U.S. Senate if reelected. A new booster film was unveiled by the mayor: *"Los Angeles – Where It's At."* (Candidate Bell complained that the film had too much footage promoting Yorty as opposed to the city.) And the city's population had reached 2.9 million, Yorty was able to report. The contract for the new city Convention Center – whose location had long been an issue – was awarded and the site would be near Pico Boulevard and Figueroa Street, Yorty announced. Similarly, he could point to a project that was to be undertaken to restore the Venice canals.

As mayor, Yorty held periodic news conferences which were televised. Not all publicity was good, however. The mayor had to testify in a bribery trial of a city councilman involving a zoning matter in which he was peripherally involved. While there was no implication that Yorty had done anything improper, the trial was a reminder of seemingly sordid goings on in city government. (The jury ultimately deadlocked, producing a mistrial.)

The 1969 Election: Quiet Time

"What Catholicism was for Jack Kennedy in 1960, color is for Tom Bradley – a sometime hindrance and a sometime help and a thing that plain won't go away."

Columnist Art Seidenbaum⁴²

In the immediate period after the major candidates' identity was established, Yorty did not especially hammer on the culturally divisive issues of the day. On the student occupation of Valley State back in November, Yorty opined that the college's authorities should have suspended the students rather than calling the police. But, on the other hand, he opposed amnesty for those students involved. Yorty said he wondered whether the college had broken some promises made to minority students, thus

⁴¹Richard Bergholz, "Yorty Discounts Adage on Runoff Defeats," *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 1969.

⁴²Art Seidenbaum, "The Thing Now Is What You're Running Against," *Los Angeles Times*, January 29, 1969.

provoking the unrest. However, he also warned about communist involvement in the Valley State affair. In short, he could be all over the map on the student protest issue. Whatever he said on the issue got him attention, even if what he said was somewhat inconsistent.

One of his appointees was involved in an organization pushing for greater Mexican-American representation in the movies. Deputy Mayor Eleanor Chambers was the first woman to hold that rank in the city; she had been associated with Yorty and his various political campaigns since the late 1940s. Another long-time associate was an African American woman, Ethel Bryant, who – as previously noted – was the mayor's administrative assistant.

Yorty, particularly since Watts, had emphasized law and order. He complained that when police are deployed into difficult situations, they were being disrespected and were called pigs. In late January, Yorty and L.A. Police Chief Tom Reddin attended a "Salute to Law Enforcement" dinner. Reddin had been the subject of criticism by Bradley for insufficient attention to training police in community relations, although as chief he was somewhat more receptive to such ideas than his predecessors.

Until about a month before the April 1 primary, the mayoral contest – once the identity of the serious candidates had been determined – was largely dormant. Yorty feuded with the city council about the municipal budget and about various tax proposals emerging from the council that he considered unrealistic. The mayor touted various construction projects, planned or underway, that were a sign of economic advance. He announced plans for a summer youth program. In short, the Yorty campaign at this point was largely a matter of staying in the news with opinions and projects.

A mayor's committee was established to deal with drug abuse. The mayor approved an ordinance to establish what became the LA-owned Palmdale Airport (a project that to this date has turned out to be a white elephant.) He announced a program to aid in a cleanup of the Watts area. And – as seepage of oil from an off-shore oil field threatened to soil LA-area beaches – Yorty announced protective measures. He also announced establishment of a senior center in MacArthur Park and plans for an art museum in Barnsdall Park.

Fundraising efforts by the candidates began. A "Citizens for Mayor Yorty" planned a fundraising dinner at the beginning of March. A "Westside Citizens for Councilman Tom Bradley" was formed as was a "Reseda Committee for Tom Bradley for Mayor" and a "Harbor Area Bradley for Mayor Committee." The Harbor Area was at the time complaining of neglect by Yorty, and both Bradley and Candidate Bell were promising residents there more attention from City Hall.

Although mayoral elections are officially non-partisan in L.A., Bradley began to emerge as the unofficial Democrat in the race (although Yorty was also a registered Democrat at the time). Bradley charged that Yorty was a "nominal, fictitious Democrat" who actually supported Republican candidates.⁴³ Bradley talked of possible tax relief but said it would require more federal and state aid to education. Yorty, he said, wasn't sufficiently aggressive in seeking such aid. Candidate Baxter Ward talked of tax relief through unnamed greater efficiencies in city government administration. However, he also pushed for some kind of rail transit system for the city (something that was later a Bradley priority when he finally became mayor).

⁴³"Bradley Charges Yorty Is a Failure as Mayor," *Los Angeles Times*, February 12, 1969.

Bradley complained that the city was not enforcing its own equal employment opportunity policies in government contracting. Yorty had endorsed creating a special entity for enforcement, but he couldn't get the city council to go along. An African American member of the Fire Commission resigned, and there were suggestions he had been pushed out. Bradley called for an investigation. The campaign began to heat up.

The 1969 Election: The Run Up to the Primary

"Funds are being channeled to disruptive elements in Los Angeles through the Chinese Communists, National Council of Churches sources and others."

L.A. Police Chief Tom Reddin⁴⁴

In early March, Richard Hatcher, the African American mayor of Gary, Indiana arrived to support the Bradley campaign. While saying that as an outsider, he *"would not pretend to tell the people here how to vote,"* Hatcher opined that Bradley was the *"most qualified candidate for mayor"* and that he was the only real Democrat in the race.⁴⁵

Although Bradley was wrapping up a series of endorsements from prominent Democrats, Yorty said that he didn't *"believe in making this a partisan campaign and the people don't either."*⁴⁶ Bradley also was reported to have the unofficial endorsement of many in local organized labor, although some union leaders, fearful that an African American couldn't be elected, preferred to back someone else who was more likely to win.⁴⁷ (Most unions ultimately did support Bradley after the primary.)

A Yorty aide was reported to have directed city departments and commissions to be sure and keep news releases flowing until the April 1 primary. And the news from and about the mayor did flow. New traffic signal systems were announced, said to reduce congestion. An L.A. promotion event in Paris was touted as generating substantially more economic activity than it had cost. A new tennis center was announced for the San Fernando Valley.

The mayor also promoted the idea of a new city ordinance – likely unconstitutional – that would allow police to arrest individuals who made insulting comments to them. Yorty continued his local TV broadcasts, advertised as reports to the citizens. He suggested implementation of what is now called a "split roll" for property taxes, with homeowners paying a lower rate than commercial properties. And he announced that there would be a "Hector Berlioz Opera Week," saluting the long-deceased composer on the occasion of an opera performance at the Shrine Auditorium.

Baxter Ward criticized the planned expenditures to develop the Palmdale Airport, a position that in hindsight seem prescient, but at the time didn't provide him with much electoral traction. However, Ward didn't oppose the new airport *per se*; he wanted some of the cost to come from the County. Ward also came out in favor of reforming the city's system of commissions.

⁴⁴Quoted in Charles T. Powers and John Kumbula, "Black Students Vow to Renew School Boycott," *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1969.

⁴⁵Eric Malnic, "Mayor of Gary, Ind., Arrives to Aid Bradley," *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1969.

⁴⁶"Southland," *Los Angeles Times*, March 2, 1969.

⁴⁷Harry Bernstein, "Big Majority of Union Leaders Unofficially Support Bradley," *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1969.

Councilman Wilkinson leaned on the corruption issue, pledging to fire any city commissioner who refused to testify before an investigative body. Bradley pointed to the "*disgraceful abuse of the public trust practiced by several of Mayor Yorty's appointees.*"⁴⁸ Alphonso Bell indicated that he supported creation of what are now called neighborhood councils. And he argued that because Yorty got into personal fights with federal, state, and county officials, the city received less funding than a more effective mayor could bring in.

Yorty said little about his opponents at this point, content to let them attack each other. He was reasonably assured that he would survive the primary, and then he could attack whoever was his lone opponent in the following runoff election. Instead, he continued appearing at ceremonial events and events aimed at wooing particular audiences. For women, for example, he sponsored a "Brunchette" in which various women appointees, volunteers, and wives of appointees were feted before an audience of female journalists. Yorty's TV ads emphasized that his trips abroad brought business and economic development to L.A. And he charged that the *LA Times* deliberately omitted positive developments reported in his numerous press releases and announcements.⁴⁹

Although the *LA Times* opposed the reelection of Yorty, before the primary it hedged its bets saying both Bradley and Bell were highly qualified, and that both would make fine mayors. Since the *Times* said it thought Bell had a better chance – probably because of doubts about the electability of an African American – it endorsed Bell.⁵⁰ It didn't, however, explain explicitly why it viewed Bell as more electable. Most likely the *Times* editorial board thought that the explanation would be obvious to readers and maybe was best left unsaid. Bell, picking up on that theme, advertised himself as the one candidate in the primary who could beat Yorty in the runoff election.

On the other hand, it was clear from the editorial that were the post-primary race to come down to Yorty versus Bradley, the *Times* would almost certainly back Bradley. Bradley, as noted, was anxious to play down the race issue: "*I am not the Negro candidate for mayor. I am the candidate for mayor deeply committed to a liberal Democratic philosophy, who is black,*" he said.⁵¹ His ads stressed competence and taking action on such issues as smog, traffic, and preventing corruption. But racial issues would keep popping up in the local news.

A group called the "Black Student Alliance" announced a strike/walkout in South L.A. junior high schools and high schools. It demanded removing police from campuses and "*the appointment of Negro principals and administrators in all schools in the black community.*" It said it would soon take its demands to City Hall and Mayor Yorty.⁵² And various trials stemming from the Valley State affair were underway, and some of the Valley State activists became involved in the school strike. The strike did succeed in closing some schools for several days.

The question, perhaps not considered by the *LA Times*, was whether at least a segment of the electorate might think that an African American mayor might do a better job than Yorty could in dealing

⁴⁸Jerry Gillam, "Bradley Calls Yorty Government 'Most Corrupt in Recent History,'" *Los Angeles Times*, March 5, 1969.

⁴⁹Richard Bergholz, "Yorty Opens Drive on TV, Calls L.A. Best-Governed City," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1969.

⁵⁰Editorial: "No Third Term for Yorty," *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 1969.

⁵¹Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Mayor Race Spotlights Struggle on Race Issue," *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 1969.

⁵²John Kumbula, "Black Students Strike Endorsed by Parents," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1969.

with such tensions. Indeed, Bradley said – when the school strike occurred – that the mayor wasn't attending to improving education and simply had blamed the strike on outside agitators and on too much publicity by the news media. Bell chimed in that Yorty had contributed to the unrest.

Yorty continued to defend his propensity to travel. At a rally in Chinatown, he declared that "*any mayor must understand the Orient*," using the language of that era. His travels brought trade through the harbor and were "*trade missions and not junkets*."⁵³ Still, he was willing to sign an ordinance enacted by the city council limiting travel of high city officials (not the mayor). And, in terms of economic development, he announced that President Nixon had invited him to Washington to discuss unemployment matters.

The mayor urged the city council to avoid paying too much attention to the upcoming election and instead to focus on the city's budgetary concerns. Yorty also called for reforming the zoning process, a process that had been involved in some of the corruption schemes that had come to light. He aired both five-minute and thirty-minute broadcasts as "reports to the people" on local TV.

Yorty believed that he had enjoyed strong support in the African American community until the Watts Riots took place. Then, because as mayor he was responsible for the police, the relationship soured for some in the Black community. But the riots were caused, in his view, by outside influences, not local conditions. He argued before the primary that he still had lots of "*support in Negro areas. When I go down there in a parade or something, it's nothing but 'Hi, Mayor Sam,'*" he said in an interview.⁵⁴ After the primary, his depiction of residual African American support was to shift.

Yorty pointed to the past history of the *LA Times* in endorsing and opposing mayoral candidates, notably its role in unseating incumbent reformist mayor Fletcher Bowren in 1953. "*If you do not go along with the Los Angeles Times' policies of city domination, they will attempt to cut you to pieces.*"⁵⁵ In response, the *Times* went back further in history and noted that Yorty had campaigned for Frank Shaw in 1933, the mayor later removed by recall for corruption in 1938.⁵⁶ Yorty wrote back that while he supported Shaw in 1933, by 1938 he had opposed retaining him in the recall. And he pointed out that the *Times* supported retention of Shaw.⁵⁷

As the primary day approached, both Bradley and Bell released financial statements and challenged Yorty to do the same. Yorty rejected the challenge as a "*phony issue*" and said he didn't have time to produce an accounting. He declared that in any case, his top opponent was "*Otis Chandler (publisher) of the Times.*"⁵⁸

Ward, as the primary date approached was apparently thinking of dropping out of the campaign entirely, and he suspended campaigning. His wife was the daughter of a known gangster, and Ward intimated that rumors that were circulated by Yorty were going around about her. Ward then got back into the race and accused Yorty of lying when he denied circulating the rumors. Bradley, meanwhile – in

⁵³"Metropolitan," *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 1969.

⁵⁴Jack Smith, "Yorty Points to His Record in Campaign for Third Term," *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 1969.

⁵⁵"Yorty Assails Times Views on Election," *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1969.

⁵⁶Editorial: "Mayor Yorty Cries 'Smear,'" *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 1969.

⁵⁷Letter to the Editor by Yorty, *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1969.

⁵⁸Quoted in Richard West, "Candidates' Wealth Declaration Phony Issue, Yorty Says," *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1969.

part because Yorty was running for a third term – endorsed the notion of a two-term limit for L.A. mayors.⁵⁹ (Bradley was elected to five terms eventually, however, starting in 1973.)

Shortly before the primary, Yorty announced he would be submitting a “balanced” budget to the city council that would not require any property tax increase. However, he defined “balance” as including drawing down the reserve fund, so that in fact there was a deficit.⁶⁰ Bradley called Yorty’s budget a “political campaign gimmick” and pledged he (Bradley) would submit a balanced budget with no tax increase if elected.⁶¹

Despite the fiscal issue, Yorty ran ads in the *LA Times* – his nemesis – using the slogan “Keep Los Angeles Great!” And despite the *LA Times*’ preference for Bell as the most viable opponent for Yorty, polls taken shortly before the primary were showing that Bradley was the leading candidate in the primary, followed by Yorty, Ward, and Bell in that order. If the polls were correct, the runoff contest would then be a Yorty vs. Bradley race. Moreover, the polling indicated that if the runoff came down to *any* one of the top-three opponents to Yorty surviving into a race with Yorty, that survivor would defeat the incumbent mayor.⁶²

Of course, the final poll was the primary itself on Tuesday, April 1. Monday had been declared a national day of mourning for former President Eisenhower who had died a few days before. Thus, campaigning on Monday, March 31, was suspended, and the city awaited the primary’s outcome. As it happened, on the day of the primary, voters were reminded of the various city scandals by the indictment of yet another former city official.

The 1969 Election: Primary Results and Immediate Aftermath

“Oh Christ, they would endorse a mad dog against Yorty... They have no principles and no ethics... anyone to beat Yorty.”

Mayor Yorty asked whether the *LA Times* would endorse Bradley in the runoff⁶³

The primary results validated the poll’s rankings of the candidates. The final vote result for the top-four candidates was:

Bradley: 42%

Yorty: 26%

Ward: 17%

Bell: 14%⁶⁴

⁵⁹“Bradley Endorses Proposal to Limit Mayor to 2 Terms,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1969.

⁶⁰Yorty, in a letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times* of April 29, 1969, defended the decrease in reserves and said the new level was still the average of the last eight years.

⁶¹Quoted in Erwin Baker, “Bradley Assails Yorty’s Budget as ‘Pure Campaign Gimmick,’” *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1969.

⁶²On the pre-primary polls, see “Bradley Now in Substantial Lead Over Yorty, Poll Shows,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1969; “Metropolitan: Yorty Would Lose Runoff, Poll Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1969.

⁶³Quoted in Kenneth Reich, “Grim Yorty Accuses Bradley of Making ‘Great Racist Appeal,’” *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1969.

⁶⁴“Election Results,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1969. It might be noted that Jerry Brown, making his political debut, came in first among the myriad candidates for what was then called the Junior College Board.

With over two thirds of the vote going to Bradley and Yorty, the runoff would depend on 1) how the voters who went for Ward, Bell, and other candidates would split their votes between the two frontrunners, 2) whether Bradley or Yorty could increase turnout of potential supporters who hadn't voted in the primary, and 3) whether the two frontrunners could hang on to their supporters in the runoff. But Bradley's strong showing in the primary – and Yorty's poor showing – gave hope to Bradley's backers that he could beat Yorty in the runoff election.

Once the primary votes were tallied, Yorty accused Bradley of making "*a great racist appeal*" to "*radical Democrats and the bloc Negro vote*."⁶⁵ He dropped the idea that he still had significant residual support among Black voters. Bradley, in contrast, said that he had "*ignored the racial issue, hoping the voters would*."⁶⁶ With Bell now out of the picture, the *LA Times* officially endorsed Bradley, noting that Yorty could be expected to mount an aggressive campaign against his opponent. The *Times* warned that "*by raising the ugly racial issue, Yorty himself gave a clue as to his campaign tactics*" during the runoff. "*His declaration that 'I haven't let loose on him yet,' further indicates the kind of campaign that Yorty intends to conduct*."⁶⁷

Bell, the *Times*' previous choice, strongly endorsed Bradley, too. One of Bell's key aides, a former campaign official for Ronald Reagan's campaign for governor in 1966, also endorsed Bradley. Bradley said he had talked with Ward's people and claimed their support, but Ward made no endorsement.

Aides to Yorty were said to have been surprised by the outcome and indicated they had not expected Bradley's strong showing. Yorty himself challenged Bradley to debate and said Bradley should have been indicted for soliciting a bribe from a developer; an accusation Bradley denied a few days after the primary as a witness in the trial of the developer. When Bradley appointed a committee to negotiate the format for a debate, Yorty dismissed the proposal because he didn't want a debate with restrictive ground rules that might constrain what he could say.

As the incumbent, Yorty had the continued ability to make news as part of his normal civic duties. The mayor proposed a property tax cut to be financed by drawing down city reserves. His budget also included a new swimming pool in Pacoima, a minority population area. And he announced a panel to study traffic problems.

But Yorty also could campaign directly. The mayor accused Bradley of being anti-police, despite Bradley's background as a former police officer. Bradley had quit the police force, according to Yorty, in order to "*cater to the militants and the antipolice people*."⁶⁸ Yorty advised voters to "*ask any policeman they know and ask him how they feel about Tom Bradley*."⁶⁹

⁶⁵Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Grim Yorty Accuses Bradley of Making 'Great Racist Appeal,'" *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1969.

⁶⁶Quoted in Robert Kistler, "Early Returns Show Race Not Campaign Issue, Bradley Says," *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1969.

⁶⁷Editorial: "Tom Bradley vs. Sam Yorty," *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1969.

⁶⁸Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Law Enforcement May Be Yorty's Key Issue," *Los Angeles Times*, April 5, 1969.

⁶⁹Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "People Should Ask Police for Opinions on Bradley --- Yorty," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1969.

A week after the primary, with Yorty pushing the police issue, L.A. Police Chief Tom Reddin abruptly resigned and announced he would soon become a newscaster on a local TV station.⁷⁰ Reddin said he had been in negotiations with the station before the primary and that his decision to step down had nothing to do with politics. Yorty, however, attributed the resignation to the possibility *"that you could get an antipolice mayor"* if Bradley were elected. Bradley in response said that he would have retained Reddin who was *"a good man."*⁷¹ He accused Yorty of attempting *"to use the Police Department as a political football."*⁷²

Yorty said that even if a new police chief could be chosen before the runoff election, *"If I appointed a chief who is not acceptable to (Bradley's) extremist-militants and the kind of people who are backing him, I doubt if he could resist the pressure to remove such a chief."* Asked for examples of the extremists, he cited the ACLU and movie star Burt Lancaster. Lancaster was a Bradley supporter and an associate of the ACLU.

Yorty charged, in addition, that Bradley had *"almost stole"* the primary election through *"deceptive tactics."* He said he hoped that when Reddin became a TV commentator – something scheduled to happen before the primary – the former chief will *"speak out loud and clear"* and that Bradley was somehow trying to keep the departing chief from speaking out on television.⁷³ Yorty hinted that there could be mass resignations of police if Bradley were elected. But Reddin said that he expected a reduced rate of retirements in the coming fiscal year.⁷⁴

While this back and forth on the police was occurring, aides from the Yorty and Bradley campaigns began meeting about a debate format, despite Yorty's earlier position that he wanted no restrictive ground rules. Bradley challenged Yorty to a series of three debates. Yorty said that any debate should be in a TV studio rather than an auditorium because Bradley would pack an auditorium with *"extreme militants."*⁷⁵

However, friction was reported within the Yorty campaign on strategy. Some folks in the Yorty campaign believed that Bradley had used TV advertising more effectively than Yorty. Yorty had put money into lengthy format TV shows – what today might be termed *"infomercials"* – whereas Bradley had used short spot advertisements. What seemed to be at the heart of the internal campaign conflict, however, was Yorty's preference for making unscripted statements and his tendency to express opinions spontaneously on all manner of issues.

The mayor might talk about local matters such as police or the need for new sewer projects. (The mayor was in conflict with the city council over sewer expenditures at the time.) But he might also opine on

⁷⁰Reddin remained on TV as a newscaster after stepping down until the 1973 election – the election in which Bradley finally defeated Yorty. Reddin competed in the 1973 primary for mayor, but he came in fourth.

⁷¹Quoted in Dial Torgerson, "Reddin Resigns," *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1969.

⁷²Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Both Yorty, Bradley Express Regret at Reddin Resignation," *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1969.

⁷³Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Reddin Resignation May Help Him in Runoff, Yorty Says," *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1969.

⁷⁴Erwin Baker, "Reddin Indicates Police Retirements Will Drop in 1970," *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1969.

⁷⁵"Bradley Urges Yorty to Join Him in 3 Public Discussions," *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1969.

military and foreign affairs such as support for an antiballistic missile system being proposed by the Nixon administration. By mid-April, however, the Yorty campaign had been reorganized under Henry Salvatori, a major figure in Republican politics and a close associate of Governor Reagan.

In addition, members of the city council allied with Yorty formed a "truth squad," ostensibly to expose Bradley's record on police and other matters. Subsequently, however, two of the three squad members dropped off. One said he had nothing to add to the truth squad. The other announced that while he favored Yorty, he would find some other way to help him.⁷⁶

Yorty's strategy had to be primarily to capture voters who had supported candidates other than Bradley and increase turnout among potential Yorty-leaning voters. *"I just hope there is a big turnout,"* he said about the runoff, *"because obviously there was a large Negro bloc vote in the primary."*⁷⁷ Leftist militants, Yorty told a Republican group, want to use Bradley *"to take over the government for their own purposes"* using *"a bloc vote based on color alone."*⁷⁸

Although Bradley had the official support of organized labor after the primary, there were conservative segments of the labor movement which were potentially antagonistic. The AFL Film Council was said to have greeted an address by Bradley with "stony silence" and then focused questions to him on police and a on former Communist Party member – Don Rothenberg – who was involved in the Bradley campaign.⁷⁹ Similarly, officials in the Democratic Party for the most part supported Bradley. But some party associates did support Yorty – who remained a registered Democrat – leading to heckling of a Yorty supporter at a party event.⁸⁰

The theme of a left-wing takeover of the city was repeated as the campaign went along. Yorty said that there was a *"left-wing effort to put together a racial coalition with left-wingers to take over your city."* He charged there was *"an alliance of the Los Angeles Times with the extreme left-wing, with the Rothenbergs and people like that."* They would start with Los Angeles but had bigger plans. *"In the nation, we badly need an authoritative government agency to tell the people of the United States the truth about subversive activities in their own country,"* the mayor said.⁸¹

Bradley's appeal to African Americans was like John F. Kennedy's appeal to Catholics, Yorty said, noting he had opposed Kennedy in 1960 for that reason. Such appeals, Yorty said, could backfire: White voters would say, *"Well, if blacks vote for him because he's black, maybe we should vote against him because*

⁷⁶"Was on Truth Squad 1 Day, Lamport Says," *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1969.

⁷⁷Kenneth Reich, "Big Vote in 'Other Areas' Will Aid His Chances, Yorty Says," *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1969.

⁷⁸Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Yorty Says Bradley Is Trying to Build Leftist-Negro Bloc," *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1969.

⁷⁹Richard Bergholz, "Mayor Needed to Unite People, Bradley Says," *Los Angeles Times*, April 23, 1969.

⁸⁰Carl Greenberg, "Democratic Women Hit Heckling of Speaker," *Los Angeles Times*, April 23, 1969.

⁸¹Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "L.A. an Experimental Area for Radical Takeover, Yorty Says," *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 1969.

he's black."⁸² A report appeared in the news that Chief Reddin had made remarks to a reporter indicating support for Yorty. Reddin denied the report.⁸³

The continuous charges from the mayor and his supporters put Bradley on the defensive. He wasn't in favor of violence. He wasn't a dupe of leftists. Rothenberg was a loyal American who had left the Communist Party a long time ago, and he wasn't going to kick him out of the campaign. He wasn't anti-police. When one of the city council members supporting Yorty identified two other former communists supporting Bradley, Bradley said he couldn't check on every volunteer in his campaign.⁸⁴ While Yorty's tactics were denounced as divisive and dirty by Bradley and his supporters, they were also having an effect. Bradley's campaign strategists by late April were reportedly concerned that he had to take a more offensive position.⁸⁵ Denying Yorty's accusations didn't add up to a sufficient campaign. The positive Bradley message of good governance was being drowned out.

The 1969 Election: The Runup to the Runoff

"They think they've got it won. And they're very confident. I don't think they have any reason to be confident."

Mayor Sam Yorty⁸⁶

May 27 was the date of the runoff and as May approached the contest had heated up. Both Bradley and Yorty appeared together at the Valley Jewish Community Center in North Hollywood. The format was supposed to be controlled. Under the rules of the program, the candidates were to speak for fifteen minutes and then respond to written questions from the audience which consisted of a women's group.

It didn't stay controlled. Yorty spoke without interruption. But when Bradley spoke, Yorty interrupted and began speaking. When the moderator insisted, Yorty eventually sat down – and Bradley continued. Yorty complained during the question portion and later that some of the questions posed were either irrelevant or unfair. He denied that a Yorty associate had accused Bradley of antisemitism saying *"he's too fine a young man"* to have done so.⁸⁷

Bradley announced that he was suspending negotiations with the Yorty team for a TV debate saying he had *"no intention of joining Mr. Yorty in the gutter."* Yorty responded that Bradley never intended to debate on TV.⁸⁸ TV or not, given the nature of the contest, the Los Angeles runoff election increasingly attracted national attention, mainly because of the racial component.

⁸²Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Bradley, Kennedy Vote Appeals the Same, Yorty Says," *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 1969.

⁸³Statement on Yorty Denied by Reddin," *Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1969.

⁸⁴Richard Bergholz, "Councilman Links 2 in Bradley Camp to Reds," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1969.

⁸⁵Richard Bergholz, "Bradley Plans Move to Seize Campaign Offensive This Week," *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 1969.

⁸⁶Kenneth Reich, "Bradley 'Arrogant,' Refuses to Debate Issues, Yorty Says," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 1969.

⁸⁷Richard Bergholz, "Bradley, Yorty Face Questions in 1st Campaign Confrontation," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1969.

⁸⁸"Bradley Suspends Negotiations for TV Debate With Yorty," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1969.

Not surprisingly, major Democrats of the era – such as Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts – endorsed Bradley. But some national Republicans did, too, among them New York Senator Charles Goodell. Yorty repeatedly denied that his connecting of Bradley to “black militants” was improper. In fact, Yorty claimed that he (Yorty) had “created such a good climate for race relations in (Los Angeles) that a black man can be a serious candidate for mayor.”⁸⁹ That is, Yorty took credit for Bradley being able to run.

Meanwhile, over forty commissioners appointed by Yorty met at a Valley restaurant to plan how they could support the mayor. When news of the restaurant meeting leaked out, Bradley then pledged that any commissioners he would appoint as mayor would be instructed not to get into politics. Another face-to-face (but not televised) confrontation between the two candidates occurred at a lawyers’ group. Although there were no interruptions this time, Yorty’s themes of the campaign were repeated.

Meanwhile, the *LA Times* continued to editorialize against Yorty. A political cartoon appeared on May 5th showing a group of old women giving the “Little Old Ladies in Tennis Shoes Award” to Yorty. (The *Little Old Ladies* phrase was often used to caricature a type of right-winger during that period.) The *Times* also seized on the revelation of the meeting of commissioners backing Yorty as improper and underlined the legal problems of other commissioners Yorty had appointed.

It noted that in one case, Yorty had called a former commissioner’s trial a “legal lynching” and attacked the judge, the district attorney, and the jury.⁹⁰ (Bradley announced that he would establish a special citizens’ task force to vet any commissioners he would appoint.) As it turned out, the *Times* won a Pulitzer Prize for exposing commissioner corruption. Yorty opined that the newspaper “must have used all its influence” to win.⁹¹

The *Times* also cited a Field Poll of registered voters indicating that Bradley would win in the runoff. By early May, the poll suggested, 52 percent would vote for Bradley, and that Bradley would in addition pick up 30 percent of Bell’s primary voters.⁹² Thus, 52 percent was the minimum Bradley could expect. Another poll conducted for the *Times* produced a similar 52 percent for Bradley and 35% for Yorty. Using the racial/ethnic terminology of the day, the *Times* reported the cross-sections below of Bradley vs. Yorty:⁹³

Caucasian: 45% for Bradley to 43% for Yorty

Negro: 90% to 19%

Mexican-American: 49% to 41%

Oriental: “nearly two-to-one” for Bradley

Democrat: 65% to 25%

Republican: 55% to 32%

Protestant: 50% to 39%

⁸⁹Quoted in Kenneth Reich, “Made Good Climate for Race Relations in City, Yorty Claims,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 1969.

⁹⁰Editorial: “Sam Yorty Tries to Alibi,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1969.

⁹¹“Mayor’s Comments on Times’ Awards,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 1969; “Two Pulitzers for the Times,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 1969.

⁹²“Bradley Holding Lead Over Yorty, Special Poll Shows,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 1969.

⁹³“Don M. Muchmore, “Bradley Leads Yorty by 16%,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1969.

Catholic: 41% to 47%

Jewish: 72% to 17%

Descriptively, the *Times* reported that younger voters favored Bradley and older voters favored Yorty.

Generally, Bradley's campaign, when he could control the message as in advertisements, continued to be about good governance. When pushed on racial issues, Bradley tended to take moderate-to-conservative positions. Thus, what we now call affirmative action – was OK, according to Bradley, but he couldn't agree that students should be admitted without some standards. Violence at schools should be dealt with by police, but authorities should also listen to student grievances. Black studies programs at colleges were fine in order to provide a more true history. But their course enrollments should not be "*limited to black students and controlled exclusively by blacks*," he said. "*I can't agree*" with that position (taken by some student activists), he said.⁹⁴ If he were mayor, Bradley said, appointments in his administration would not be made using a "*quota system*."⁹⁵

However, it was hard for Bradley to control the issue, both because of events that would occur, and because Yorty would point to such events. A church service was disrupted by what was described in the *Times* as a dozen black militants. As a result, Mayor Yorty announced he had instructed the interim police chief to protect churches and synagogues. (Reddin had by this time stepped down and begun his TV career)

More generally, Yorty predicted that if Bradley were elected, "*militants could come down and intimidate the City Council*."⁹⁶ In another incident, this one at L.A. City College just a few days before the election, a fist fight developed involving Black Student Union members and student government leaders. Mayor Yorty ordered the police to provide protection for the student leaders.⁹⁷

Although there were still ongoing matters in court and elsewhere that might have reminded voters of the corruption issues of the city, the high volume of charges being made tended to eclipse whatever influence the corruption issue might have had. In mid-May, an apparently forged letter was circulated under the signature of a Bradley supporter saying that "*Bradley is the puppet of the strong Chandler regime*." (The Chandler family owned the *LA Times*.) "*Should he become mayor, our city's guidance will not come from City Hall, but will come from Times Mirror Square*."⁹⁸ The Yorty campaign denied circulating the letter, but – of course – the publicity surrounding the affair reinforced the Yorty message.

Despite Bradley's favorable results in opinion polls, there were indications that the race could be close and might be moving in Yorty's favor. A week before the election, the city council was split in terms of its support in the runoff. Six members favored Yorty, five favored Bradley, and the remaining four were

⁹⁴Quoted in "Adults Must Listen to Complaints of Youth, Bradley Says," *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1969.

⁹⁵Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Bradley Says Yorty Fails to Publicly Report on \$700,000," *Los Angeles Times*, May 19, 1969.

⁹⁶Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Militants Could Harass Council if Bradley Wins, Yorty Suggests," *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1969.

⁹⁷Dave Felton, "Student Reports Differ on Fist Fight at LACC," *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1969.

⁹⁸Quoted in William Endicott, "Letter Backing Yorty Puzzling to Both Sides," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 1969. The reference is to the old *LA Times* building close to City Hall. In its much diminished state, the *Times* is now located in El Segundo.

neutral.⁹⁹ A controversy developed over a poll commissioned by the Yorty campaign that was confined to White and largely non-Jewish areas of the city. Not surprisingly, the results favored Yorty. However, what the poll may have been designed to do was to see if those areas – in which Yorty's post-primary appeal might be most effective – were increasing his support in both votes and turnout.¹⁰⁰

The Yorty campaign may well have had an indication that its messaging was effective. Shortly after the Yorty poll controversy, a large ad was placed in the *LA Times* of May 22nd with the headline, "*Will Your Family Be Safe?*" The ad focused on the issues of police, left-wing militants, and former communists in the Bradley campaign. A Field Poll – the last before the election – showed Bradley with 43%, Yorty with 38%, and 19% undecided, but with a suggestion that the undecided voters would tilt toward Bradley.¹⁰¹ However, a poll conducted for the *LA Times* shortly before the election continued to show Bradley winning with at least 53 percent.¹⁰²

Contemporary readers may find the racial dichotomy of the 1969 campaign odd. But as noted earlier, what today might be termed the Latinx population of the city (then referred to as Mexican-American) was much smaller than today. Mexican Americans tended to be lumped with African Americans in the assumptions of some (White) observers of that era as the "minority" population. But as the polls cited in the *LA Times* indicated, the Mexican-American vote was not anywhere near as supportive of Bradley as the African American vote.

Bradley had appealed to Mexican-American voters during the campaign by supporting the grape boycott of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers union. Toward the end of the campaign, he supported the creation of more city council seats to increase the chance that a Mexican American would be elected. (There were none on the council at that time.) Nonetheless, the election tended to be seen, especially in national commentaries, through a Black/White lens.

On election night, early figures showed Yorty ahead, and the results continued to favor Yorty until the final tabulation. Yorty received 53% of the vote compared to Bradley's 47%. (Although no one was paying close attention, Jerry Brown secured his first electoral office on the Junior College Board.) Bradley's victory speech, which he had prepared, but – of course – had not ended up giving, was found on the backseat of the car that had taken him to his campaign dinner party. It spoke of voters who had come out motivated "*not by fear but by hope; not by hate but by love.*" Instead, Bradley had to tell his supporters that they should "*keep the faith with what we've been trying to do*" and await the final election results in the morning.¹⁰³ Bradley was not alone in feeling defeat; the *Times'* pollster, shortly after the election, promised to study why he had been so wrong.

As noted, the Bradley-Yorty contest had become national news. It was clear, after the election, that Yorty's message of law and order, of a threat from the left, and of a threat to the police, had resonated

⁹⁹"Backs Yorty, Shepard Says," *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1969.

¹⁰⁰"Poll Cited by Yorty Camp Was Taken Only in Limited Areas," *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1969.

¹⁰¹Mayor Race Narrows, Latest Survey Shows," *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1969.

¹⁰²Don M. Muchmore, "Bradley Keeps 15% Lead Over Yorty in Race," *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1969.

¹⁰³Quoted in Robert Kistler, "Bradley Fans Never Hear Message on Which He Toiled," *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1969.

sufficiently to win the election. But the issue was in part why it resonated and with whom that resonance had succeeded.

Prominent, and relatively conservative, national columnist Joseph Alsop blamed the defeat of Bradley on student radicals who were responsible for *"the dreadful troubles at Berkeley, by the fools from SNCC, and by the left-wingers at UCLA, who virtually forced that great university to celebrate its 50th anniversary in the coal cellar."*¹⁰⁴ While it was true that UC-Berkeley student protests had played a role in Ronald Reagan's winning the governorship in 1966, there was little in the L.A. campaign overtly about Berkeley or UCLA. If anything, it was the conflict at Valley State College that played some role. Of course, Alsop, writing from Washington, DC may well have never heard of Valley State and may also have had no knowledge of the local school walkout in L.A. during the campaign. Still, the notion of student disruptions as a causal factor – a general climate of disorder – was widespread. Another prominent national columnist of that period, Joseph Kraft, saw the Yorty victory as part of the national move to the right, noting that President Nixon had also focused on *"student radicals."*¹⁰⁵ Bradley himself connected his defeat to Yorty's linking him to *"racial and student unrest."*¹⁰⁶ Whether he was referring to Valley State and the local school strike or to student unrest in general is not clear.

The one statistical analysis available – which unfortunately was published with little background on the underlying methodology – suggests that turnout among all groups was much higher in the runoff than in the primary. It found that the reaction of both Whites and Mexican Americans was in fact similar; higher turnout and a similar move away from Bradley toward Yorty. The Jewish voters that the Bradley campaign counted on had given him 52% in both elections. But that meant that Jews who voted for Bell, Ward, or the other candidates in the primary had largely shifted to Yorty.¹⁰⁷ As expected, the African American vote went heavily to Bradley in both the primary and the runoff.

Not the End

"I only hope the mayor realizes what he has done to this city."

Tom Bradley after the runoff election¹⁰⁸

"We go forward together in a spirit of unity. We are a city of many ethnic origins, nationalities, and religions. We desire to live, work and hope together in this, our chosen home, with mutual respect and understanding."

Sam Yorty, Third Inaugural Address¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴Joseph Alsop, "Reading the Lessons of the Los Angeles Election," *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 1969. SNCC stood for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, a civil rights group viewed as militant.

¹⁰⁵Joseph Kraft, "Nixon Flirting With the Right," *Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 1969.

¹⁰⁶Quoted in Lee Dye, "Bradley Declares Fear Formed Basis for Reelection of Yorty," *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1969.

¹⁰⁷Maullin, op. cit. Sometimes, the African American-Jewish alliance in the Bradley coalition is said to have been an African American-Westside Jewish Alliance, with the implication that it primarily included a liberal Jewish population on the Westside as opposed to the San Fernando Valley. The Valley, of course, was Yorty's home base. However, available poll results do not make the regional division.

¹⁰⁸"Yorty Surprise: A 3rd Term," *Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 1969.

¹⁰⁹Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Yorty Takes Oath of Office for Third Term," *Los Angeles Times*, July 1, 1969.

Readers looking back at the 1969 election have the advantage of hindsight. They know that when the Bradley-Yorty contest repeated four years later, the outcome reversed, and they know that Bradley ended up serving as mayor of Los Angeles for twenty years thereafter. Thus, the story of the 1969 election is often forgotten as a kind of bump in the road of the Bradley story. But in some respects, the 1969 election, looked at in hindsight, seems a forerunner of much more recent elections and political divisions.

As noted in the introduction, a chapter in an earlier volume of *California Policy Options* told the story of Yorty's first election as mayor in 1961.¹¹⁰ In that election, the Yorty candidacy had certain Trump-like elements, mainly campaigning against the elite who ran the city and against the news media, mainly the *LA Times*. The 1961 campaign also featured Yorty making charges against his opponent that would inevitably attract attention, i.e., a constant stream of free publicity, and his adroit use of television to echo his remarks.

Yorty campaigned as an outsider in 1961, although he had been in and out of local politics during his earlier career. But in 1961, he did not play on the racial issue. Indeed, he was happy to draw votes from any group that had votes available. And he legitimately claimed later that in his first term he had done more to integrate his administration than any of his mayoral predecessors.

By 1965, when Yorty ran for his second term, he had (temporarily) won over the *LA Times*, mainly by being a booster of city development.¹¹¹ But not long after his second election as mayor came the Watts Riot. Yorty seemed to take Watts as a personal affront. He was not especially receptive to reforms that might be needed or at least to having the city paying for them. From his viewpoint, African Americans were not sufficiently appreciative of the gains he had provided pre-Watts. By the runoff in 1969, he had largely written off the African American vote, and said so explicitly.

As a result, in the 1969 election, Yorty appealed to White voters almost exclusively. He was not deterred by those folks, including moderate Republicans, who were repelled by a divisive campaign. The state had already moved to the right with the election of Ronald Reagan as governor three years earlier. The country had moved to the right with the election of Richard Nixon, a California native son. Los Angeles, with its very different demographics then as compared to what was to evolve, had followed the national shift in response to the same forces driving national politics.

Did Bradley, once the results of the 1969 election were clear, have immediate plans to run again in 1973? In a much later interview, he said that he did.¹¹² In the short term, however, he had to deal with a personal problem. One of his two daughters, Phyllis – who had already been put on probation for theft – was arrested for shoplifting, although the department store involved eventually decided not to press charges. Phyllis Bradley was destined to play a troublesome Hunter Biden-type role for Bradley

¹¹⁰Daniel J.B. Mitchell, "The Trash-Talking Candidate Who Wasn't Supposed to Win," in Daniel J.B. Mitchell, ed., *California Policy Options 2018* (UCLA Luskin School, 2018), pp. 134-156. Available at <https://archive.org/details/YortyCPO2018>.

¹¹¹Daniel J.B. Mitchell, "Before the Storm: Yorty's Second Election as Mayor of Los Angeles," *California Policy Options 2021* (UCLA Luskin School, 2021), pp. 73-89. Available at <https://archive.org/details/before-the-storm>.

¹¹²Payne and Ratzan, op. cit., p. 111.

throughout his subsequent career. In any case, Bradley chose not to attend Yorty's third inauguration ceremony. Perhaps – even if his plans to run again were not as fully firmed up as he later said – he knew that in politics, nothing is forever. And, in this case, it wasn't.



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